

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

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INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 084183

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, VN, PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR CALLS ON INDOCHINA

1. AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR, SIR PATRICK SHAW, CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB APRIL 12 FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RECENT EVENTS AND PROSPECTS IN INDOCHINA. SHAW OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN POSSIBLE IMPACT OF EVENTS ON FORTHCOMING VISIT OF PM WHITLAM TO WASHINGTON.

2. SHAW DESCRIBED PM WHITLAM AS "IN THE MIDDLE", WITH HIS DEPUTY PM, JIM CAIRNS, MAKING OPENLY PRO-VC NOISES ON ONE SIDE AND A NEW AND MORE AGGRESSIVE OPPOSITION UNDER MALCOLM FRASER ATTACKING GOA POLICY AS ANTI-SAIGON FROM THE OTHER SIDE. SHAW VENTURED THAT, GIVEN THE OPPOSITION'S MOBILIZATION OF CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC OPINION, HE FELT WHITLAM WOULD "REALIZE IT IS NOT THE PROPER TIME" TO MOVE FORWARD ON CONCEPT OF A PRG INFORMATION OFFICE IN AUSTRALIA. "I WOULD THINK THAT THE OPPOSITION WOULD MAKE
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THAT IMPOSSIBLE", HE SAID.

3. DURING MEETING, HABIB RECEIVED NEWS OF FRENCH RECOGNITION OF GRUNK, AN ACT HE DESCRIBED TO SHAW AS UNSEEMLY"

4. DISCUSSING HUMANITARIAN AND EVACUATION EFFORTS, HABIB SAID GOA HAD "DONE THE DECENT THING" IN SENDING ITS PLANES TO THE AREA; HE EXPRESSED USG APPRECIATION. SHAW DESCRIBED CONTINUING GOA EFFORTS TO AIRLIFT FOOD FOR UNICEF DISTRIBUTION, AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS.

5. CALL WAS ON SHAW'S INITIATIVE AND HE APPEARED UNINSTRUCTED. HIS MAJOR CONCERN (HIGHLIGHTED FURTHER IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH EA/ANP DIRECTOR MOSER) WAS APPARENTLY THAT WHITLAM-FORD MEETING ON MAY 7, MIGHT TAKE PLACE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF WORLDWIDE DEBATE OVER PROPRIETY OF US "MILITARY INTERVENTION" TO EVACUATE US CITIZENS AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM VIET-NAM. KISSINGER

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